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# THE POWER OF AN ENDLESS LIFE

By  
HENRY HALLAM SAUNDERSON



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Irving A. West










**THE POWER  
OF AN  
ENDLESS LIFE**



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# THE POWER OF AN ENDLESS LIFE

BY  
HENRY HALLAM SAUNDERSON



THE CENTURY CO.

*New York and London*

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DEDICATED  
TO  
THE MEMORY OF  
MY MOTHER



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THE POWER OF  
AN ENDLESS LIFE





# THE POWER OF AN ENDLESS LIFE

## CHAPTER I

### THE DISCOVERY OF IMMORTALITY

**I**N imagination go back to a time about nineteen hundred years ago when there were thousands of pilgrims in Jerusalem. They had assembled there for a great festival which was held every spring-time. They came from many lands, and spoke many languages; but they were drawn together by the traditions of the land of their ancestors. This time there was an interest, more intense than in other years, in the events of the passing days, be-

cause of the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. The people thronged about him in the temple and in the city streets.

At the end of the week there were pilgrims who began the long journey homeward, slow of tread and heavy-hearted, telling as they went the story of the tragedy on Calvary. Along the same highways, at the beginning of a new week, went other pilgrims fleet of foot and winged with joy. They overtook these first pilgrims and told the strange tale of the resurrection. After that the two stories traveled on together: tragedy and triumph, death and resurrection. They have traveled down through the centuries together. Wherever the story of Calvary is told, there is told also the story of the garden in which was the new tomb.

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The two stories are like two streams that have flowed together, and become intimately mingled. Yet if we trace them back to their beginnings they are like two streams flowing from the two sides of a mountain,—one from the north with its shadows and its chill, the other from the south with its sunlight and its warmth. One is the story of Friday with its despair, the other the story of Sunday with its hope. These two days have been studied with the utmost care, and every possible item of knowledge about them noted. But the day which lies between is a strange day, which has never been adequately interpreted.

On that strange day no one was getting ready for what was to happen the next day. It has been said that the stories of the resurrection were

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prompted by the hopes of the disciples: but they were in deep despair. Even the faithful women who were followers of Jesus spent that day in preparing their spices to be carried to the tomb. They had no expectation of throwing them away in the joy of the discovery of immortality. Judas had ended his own life. Peter and others were planning to go back to their fishing, thinking to take up life where they had left it when Jesus called them. The priests and Pharisees were congratulating themselves that they had silenced the disturber of their peace by taking his life. A detachment of the temple police was on guard outside the tomb where the body had been hastily laid. So many things were being done, and none of them a preparation for the real event of the new morning!

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Exactly what happened nobody knew at the time, and nobody has been able fully to explain since. But very suddenly, out of the black despair, came the conviction that the spirit of Jesus was immortal. By voice and appearance that spirit had made itself known. Against the barriers of grief and doubt that knowledge made its way to human hearts. It became a great conviction, a radiant certainty. To the disciples it carried the conviction of the immortality of their own souls. It transformed for them the world in which they lived.

Sometimes we may understand a light, in some measure, by its radiance, even when we cannot make an analysis of its source. No one can get the meaning of the faith of the disciples in the immortality of their Master who

does not see the light which was shed upon the years that followed. That faith in immortality became the glowing heart of their message: the immortality of Jesus and of all who became his disciples.

The years brought the utmost hardship, the bitterest persecution, to the followers of the new faith; but there was a joy which transformed the pain, and a radiance which redeemed the darkness. It is impressive to see the expressions of this paradox, to see the light of that changed world in which the early Christians lived. The ardor of youth, the idealism of devotion to an unseen Leader, and the glory of the dream of a changed world were elements in the spirit of those people.

Christian art has rendered priceless service in the interpretation of the

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Christian story; but it has also done some damage to truth, damage which is difficult, if not impossible, to repair. How many pictures there are of the face of Christ which suggest weakness and depression! How few there are which express adequately the wondrous cheer, courage and faith of that radiant life!

Again, how many pictures there are of the disciples of Christ which represent them as men of great dignity and of venerable years! None of the great artists has expressed adequately the spirit of youth in that company. Jesus was only about thirty years old when he began to preach. He gathered about him a group of eager young men ready for an adventure. They were not cold, calculating, mature men who abandoned promptly their boats and

their nets and their remunerative tax-gathering when the voice of the Carpenter of Nazareth called them to share his life in the open.

The men who were ready to obey the message, given in glowing words upon the hillside, were not those in whose hearts the fires of youth had burned low, or to whose eyes the world had lost the light of morning. It was not out of a drab world that the men came who leaped to the challenge, "The time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service!" And the challenge was not merely an appeal to grim determination and stoical endurance, for in the same hour Jesus spoke the profound truth, "Your sorrow shall be turned into joy."

We have missed the real meaning of that heroic age if we have not learned



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two things about it: the suffering involved in it, and the joy that made its matchless radiance. These two things seem contradictory, but in reality they were inseparable. It was an era of high courage, and chivalry, and romantic daring on the part of the followers of Christ. But it was the conviction that their Master had risen from the dead that gave the disciples that courage. During his lifetime their confidence in him was a confidence that he would overcome his foes and win a visible triumph. When the shadow of Calvary darkened that hope, they forsook him, denied him, and despaired of his cause. Their courage, even to the point of martyrdom, becomes the more luminous against that dark background of their despair.

When the conviction came that their

Master lived eternally, and that nothing on earth could terminate his comradeship with them, they lived a new life in a new world: not an easy life in a kindly world, but a life of heroism in a hostile world. That life and that world were illuminated, however, by this matchless radiance of faith in the immortality of their spirits and in a comradeship, with their Master, which should be unending.

These men saw their world through the eyes of youth, and felt life with the pulse of youth and had the idealism which is characteristic of the unspoiled heart untouched by materialism and cynicism. Like golden threads woven into a great tapestry are those passages, in the early Christian writings, which tell of the suffering and the joy that were in the hearts of those

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early followers of Christ. James was elucidating this paradoxical truth when he said, "The trying of your faith worketh patience," and then added, "My brethren, count it all joy."

Was it in reality all joy to endure discipline? Yes, to those who had the high-hearted courage to *count it* all joy. This is a magnificent expression of their attitude toward life. The writer of the book of Hebrews says of Christ, "Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross." Paul, on his last journey to Jerusalem, addressed the elders of the church of Ephesus. He told them of his certainty that "bonds and afflictions" awaited him. But connected inseparably with this was the note of triumphant joy. He says, "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto

myself, so that I might finish my course with joy and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.”

The hardship and the joy were not associated by mere accident. These men had the utmost conviction that they had come into contact with an immortal world, that they lived an immortal life, that they were sustained by power which came from that world. That power was not, to them, impersonal; for they were perfectly certain that it was the working of the personality, the will, of their divine Master, in whose unbroken comradeship they lived. In that relationship they found a throbbing joy which language could not adequately express. But they were certain that through their hardships they were serving the purposes

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of their Master, were living the life of the unseen world and were sustained by immortal power. It was an experience of sustaining strength, a clear consciousness of a deathless comradeship.

When the great artists portray the disciples of Christ, who became apostles, as men of dignity and of venerable years, they forget that few if any of them lived to venerable years or escaped martyrdom for their Master. Their bitter enemies endeavored to cut them off without remembrance, to obliterate them and their work so completely that the world would forget that such men had ever lived. Little do we know, indeed, of the material facts of their fate. But Christian tradition tells us that they went with joy to torture and to death. Their figures

faded from the eyes of living men, but the light of their lives is an undying radiance.

If in the words of one or two men we caught the note of joy in hardship we might say they were ecstatic; but this was the major characteristic of a fellowship which extended to uncounted thousands, to many lands, to people of various races and languages, and which continued for many years. There was more than an individual experience in this association of hardship with joy, for there was a great comradeship among these men who had taken the cross as the symbol of their triumphant faith. Paul, writing to the church in Corinth, says, "I am filled with comfort; I am exceeding joyful in all your tribulation."

From these golden threads, running

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through the fabric of the New Testament, we learn something of the meaning of that radiant faith of those first Christian years. There is a large significance in that cheerful faith, that capacity for endurance, that way of looking at the world. If we are to account for it we must acknowledge that a new meaning had come into the life of that time. Such illumination calls for a search for the source of the light itself. There was something more than human strength in the endurance of these men, something more than human wisdom in their councils.

The manner of the coming, to the first disciples, of the conviction of immortal life is revealed in the stories of the appearances of the risen Christ to these disciples. There is much variety in those stories. It was a memorable

day in the experience of these disciples when they beheld the last of these appearances. They had learned that life is more than the life of earth: that it is immortal. They had been taught the message of the gospel. They had been commanded to carry to the whole world the good news of the immortal life, to preach the principles of Christ to all the nations. The wide world and its great need had been pointed out to them. The colossal task was set before them. The message was so urgent, and the need of the world so great!

But abruptly they are told by the risen Christ that they are to "tarry in Jerusalem." What, remain silent with such a message burning on their lips? Wait when there were such important reasons for haste? Delay



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when the whole world was stumbling on its way in need of this light? Yes, they must wait until they were really ready for so great a task.

If worldly wisdom had been consulted as to the need of tarrying in Jerusalem, they might have received a number of answers. They might have been told that these fishermen should learn more of the ways of good society; or that uncultured men should learn the rules of logic before they undertook the work of instruction; or that there should be careful and effective organization, with officers and directors and committees, if so great a piece of work were to be undertaken. Surely, too, they ought to get an endowment fund and make sure of the financial resources of the movement. Should not these men arrange for letters of credit

before going to foreign countries? And would it not be necessary to seek the support of men of social standing and political influence if the existing world were to be evangelized?

But it was not worldly wisdom which told them to tarry in Jerusalem, and which gave the reason for a breathless expectancy: for the command was to tarry "till ye be endued with power from on high." That power could use the tongues of fishermen, could give them utterance, and could communicate through them the deathless message of the gospel.

Indeed these men were not to entangle themselves with the social ways and the financial resources and the political intrigues of the established life of the world. They were to go out with a message that had within it the

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power of a great upheaval. They were assured that the existing pattern of the world was transitory. They were not to love that world and the things of that world. They were not to be conformed to it; for they were in contact with a power, working through their inner life, which would transform them into the likeness of an eternal world. They were to justify what was later said about them, "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also."

When Pentecost had come, and these men had received the fulfilment of the promise of power, they did go out as the bearers of the message which had been entrusted to their care. Other teachers of the time (notably the Stoics) had excellent moral principles to impart; but these men had the story

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of a *life*. And more than that: it was an *endless* life. Still more it was not simply the narrative of a life which had proved itself deathless: they went out to show men the *power* of an endless life.

These men had come close to the heart of reality. They had made the discovery that it is spirit that creates and recreates the world; and that spirit outlasts the things which it creates. They were assured that the visible is always dependent on the invisible. To gain the transitory things and to lose the eternal would be folly indeed. It is a great word which Paul speaks to the disciples in Corinth, "For the fashion of this world passeth away."

In writing to Rome he addressed men who were under an enormous pressure of tradition and custom which

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tended toward worldly ways. It was to these men in the world's capital that he wrote, "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds." That spiritual power with which they were in contact would work through their spirits for the transformation of their visible life, and through that transformation would be revealed "the perfect will of God." They would not attach themselves to transitory things; they would not build on foundations already crumbling. They had come to the heart of reality, and established indissoluble bonds with that which is deathless.

Their message to the world was, then, a message that communicated that same power. Again we find a glowing expression of this faith when

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Paul says, "When I came to you, I came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom . . . and my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom but in demonstration of the spirit and of power." And in elucidating this great truth he adds, "Not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth."

Such faith opens the door of a new world. Instead of spiritual things being vague and shadowy, and material things substantial, the reverse was true; for they had a most vivid sense of the reality of the unseen while material things were, to their vision, vanishing like mists dissolved by the sun of a new and glowing day. This gives great significance to the saying, "Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your pos-

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sessions, knowing that ye have for yourselves a better possession and an abiding one." This is not only a joy which sheds a glory upon hardship but a sense of the reality of eternal power in a transitory world.

When a company of young men had seen the immortal spirit of their risen Master, when they had passed through the experience of Pentecost, and when they had gained this vivid sense of the presence of the eternal world, they were ready to preach a gospel of *power*. It was a gospel which was to be triumphant over the material world. That company of men had in it the spirit of youth, a spirit which was secure against the deadly cynicism of that age. High-hearted, with dauntless courage, with indomitable will, they went out to bear their message.

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What mattered any material thing in comparison with that message? Suffering, hardship, toil and journeying—yes, even martyrdom—were of the material world, and the winds of the Eternal were blowing away the dust of that world.

With differing personalities, with varying forms of expression, the hope which they conveyed to men was, "That ye may know Christ and the power of his resurrection." They won new disciples for their unseen Master, and wove the fabric of a fellowship which included men of all the nations. When those nations crumbled, this fellowship was destined to endure. These followers of Christ had the assurance that they were sustained by the power of an endless life.



## CHAPTER II

### THE SOURCE OF POWER

**W**HEN, at dawn, one is looking westward, and sees the hill-tops touched with gold, and then the advancing illumination which glorifies trees and shrubs and finally floods the fields, he knows that the sun has risen over the eastern horizon. He is as sure of this as if he directed his gaze toward the sun itself. When one looks at the landscape of the first Christian centuries and sees the radiance upon them, he knows that there was a source of illumination. To estimate the influence of the coming of Jesus into the world one must do several things: one

of them being to see the light upon the rugged landscape of those years.

The world situation at that time was not prophetic of a revival of religion. There were three major influences in that era: Rome, with its law, its organization and its military dominance; Greece, with its philosophy, its art and its expressive language, though Greece was under the political power of Rome; and the tradition of Israel, represented in two little provinces, ruled by Rome, and in a scattered people who still kept the memories of their fatherland.

These three had lost their youth. Rome was materialistic, and the forces were at work which would bring about her dissolution and destruction. The vigor of Greece had waned, though there was still the desire to teach language and literature and a method of

living. The religion of the Jews, their supreme achievement, had become formal. Not long before the time of Jesus the high priest deemed it advisable to construct, in the temple in Jerusalem, a screen, a net, that he might not be in danger of attack during the ceremonies.

Rome was watchful for any signs of spontaneous movement in any part of the empire, which might tend toward revolt. Hence the Christian movement was alarming, and the force of the empire was set against it. This new faith was persecuted by the authorities of the Jewish religion, but that was a minor matter compared with the persecutions by the Roman military power.

Judging the worldly forces of the times, one would not expect a great

spiritual movement to arise; and when Christianity did arise one would predict that it would be checked and then destroyed. When the time came that Christians used the catacombs, underground tombs, as places of worship, it would seem as if their plight was pitiable in the extreme, that they were reduced to desperate straits and that their situation was utterly hopeless. Overhead in the sunlight rolled the chariots of the empire, with all the evidence of permanent and dominant power. It would seem as if that power possessed the future. Who would predict that those few hymn-singing people in the darkness and the flickering shadows of the catacombs possessed a power which would survive the empire? Yet those chariots were really rumbling on their way to ruin,

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and the spiritual power of a new faith was destined to rise above the ruin.

At one time a Roman emperor was musing. He recalled that a Roman governor had sentenced Jesus to crucifixion, and that the power of Rome had done its utmost to obliterate the faith of Jesus as it spread throughout the empire. He saw the growing power of that faith. He saw the processes of disintegration in his own empire, processes which would bring its ruin, for the empire had no spiritual bonds to hold it together. And as he mused, this Roman emperor exclaimed, "O Nazarene, thou hast conquered."

As one, looking westward, knows that the sun has risen because he sees the illumination of the landscape, so one must recognize that a new spiritual power had come abruptly into the

life of that time, for its effects are evident. What was it that Jesus brought into the world, which was to rise above the ruins of the empire? The time was approaching when Jerusalem would be destroyed and the people of Judea dispersed; but a spiritual power, born within Judea, would survive. Greek was to become a dead language, though at the time of Jesus it was the principal international tongue. Jesus spoke in Aramaic, a language known to comparatively few, and despised by many, in the world of his time. But his faith used Greek as an implement and did its work among the nations. The Christian faith reached out, in the ardor of its missionary zeal, even to the barbaric tribes of the north; and when those tribes overran Rome they had respect for the

institutions of the religion of Jesus. Upon the pattern of the organization of the empire, a new spiritual organization was formed, rising out of the ruins.

Not the influence of Judaism in dispersion; nor the beauty of the Greek language, fading from the minds of living men; nor the waning power of Roman law and armies was to dominate the new age. These things were implements in the hands of a new spiritual power,—implements to be used, and, in time, to be cast aside when they were outworn. That new spiritual power was the faith of Jesus Christ.

What, then, did he bring into the world? What is the essential thing in his gospel? What did he really add to the life of humanity? Having looked westward, at the dawn of that new day,

and observed the radiance upon the rugged landscape of the world, it is well to turn and look eastward and seek a better understanding of the source of that illumination.

Turning to the story contained within the gospels, several answers have been offered as to what is the first essential of that story. One is that Jesus was the supreme teacher of the ages; that the Sermon on the Mount contains the highest ethics which the world has known; that the essential thing is that Jesus offered men a new *plan* for their living.

The answer is important, but is it sufficient? True, the teachings of Jesus are the wisest in the world. He taught men how to live. He gave matchless precepts for the conduct of the individual. He also showed the in-



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dividual how to relate himself to society, so that he may become a useful and loyal citizen in his community. The kind of individual which Jesus taught that a man should be makes a good neighbor. Men who live after his plan of life find it easy to live *together*. The plan contained within the teaching of Jesus is a good plan for the personal life and for the social order.

The teaching of Jesus applies also to the contacts of the nations. If communities adopt his plan, it is easy for them to adjust their relationships with other communities; and nations could establish a wholesome life for the world. After nineteen hundred years the possibilities of that teaching are not exhausted; they have not been "tried and found wanting." Men turn to that teaching for guidance in time of doubt,

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for the clarifying of conscience, for wisdom when civic affairs are baffling, for the reinforcement of their wills. Very wistfully men turn to that teaching, hoping for abiding peace among the nations of the world.

Wise and comprehensive as is the plan of life which Jesus taught, we still ask, Is that the heart of his gospel? Was it of the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount that the Roman emperor spoke when he said, "O Nazarene, thou hast conquered"? Was it this better plan of living, this deeper wisdom in behavior, which shattered old kingdoms and created new ones? Evidently there was something more in the message of the gospel.

A second answer that is given, to the question of what Jesus gave the world, is that he differs from other teachers in

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his emphasis upon the inner life, that he exalts *purpose* to its full moral significance. He offered more than rules of conduct, rules for men and communities and nations: for he showed men what their motives should be. The older law judged men by their visible deeds, by what could be seen, in their conduct, by the eyes of men. Jesus emphasized the spirit of the ancient declaration, "The Lord judgeth not as man judgeth; for man looketh upon the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh upon the heart."

Jesus may be compared with Moses as a law-giver, and similarities and contrasts may be found. The mountain of the ten commandments may be compared with the mountain where Jesus taught the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus himself makes these contrasts:

“Ye have heard that it hath been said . . . but I say unto you.” He shows that righteousness is of the heart, that obedience is of the will, and he warns men of the origin of sin within themselves. A man’s obedience to the older law could be known by those who watched his physical behavior. But if we understand the teaching of Jesus we know that a man can sit down on a chair, fold his hands, and violate every one of the ten commandments. Not merely other rules for outer behavior, but a new valuation of *motives*, of the inner *impulses*, of the action of the *will*, distinguish the teaching of Jesus.

Is this answer, however valuable it is, sufficient however to account for the effects of the Christian faith? Was it an emphasis on will which sent the apostles out to die for their faith?

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Was it for this that men went cheerfully to the stake and to the lions? Very evidently there was something more in the gospel message.

A third answer goes one step further. Jesus did not merely teach abstract principles of living, even for the inner life: he gave men a *pattern* in his own being, in his own living. The apostles, conveying the teaching of Jesus, did not have to give merely forms of words and statements of principles; for they could picture their Master as they had seen him, and could interpret his motives expressed in his own life.

Men expect from a religious teacher that he shall exemplify his teaching in his own living. An engineer may do his work on paper, and design bridges and project tunnels without ever seeing the valleys bridged or the moun-

tains bored. He may use his imagination, draw his plans, use measurements made by his surveyors, and give instructions to those who do the work. All this he may do within the four walls of a room without seeing the work done or lifting a finger in the labor.

A man may bear, and may deserve, the name of physician though his medical work is entirely within the classroom. He may instruct other men in the art of healing without himself ever seeing a patient or writing a prescription. He may gather needed information, give it orderly arrangement, and impart it to others while he does not come into contact with the sick, even those who, in time, owe their lives to his wisdom.

Not so with the teacher of religion:

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it is expected of him that he will not be dissociated from the life he is teaching. As the teacher of athletics should be an athlete, so the teacher of morals should be righteous. The teacher of religion should set an example before the eyes of those whom he instructs. He should be that which he admonishes other men to be. His whole personality is involved in his instruction. And, judged by this standard, Jesus is the supreme teacher of the race. If one could understand the life he lived among men, and reproduce his purposes, then indeed would the life of the disciple be guided by the life of the Master.

But again, is this a sufficient answer to the question, What was the heart of the gospel message? Was the example which Jesus set before the eyes of

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men, for their living, the cause of the radiance of the years that followed his life? Was it this that rose in triumph over the red ruin of the greatest empire of the ancient world?

We approach the real answer to our question when we discover the *power* which was manifested in the life of Jesus, and learn the source of that power. This discovery leads to the real secret of that transformation of life, and that radiance which illuminated the world.

Naturally we find little said, in the gospels, about what Jesus did in solitude. The records are exceedingly brief, but they are infinitely precious. The truth back of those records is of supreme importance.

Imagine people out upon the hillside listening to the Master. They forget



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all about the passing of time. They listen to the music of his voice, are moved by the ardor of his words, and they watch his animated countenance. "Never man spake like this man." The day is waning, and evening approaches. Long shadows fall across the valleys. The west is crimson and gold. The hills become purple. The valleys fill with silvery flowing mists. Still the people listen, until the message ceases and they are dismissed to seek a lodging for the night.

Early next morning some of these people, eager to hear the Master again, rise and seek for him. They go to the market-place thinking he may be among the early traders; but he is not there. Then they go to the synagogue hoping to find him reading or teaching; but he is not to be found. They search

up and down the narrow streets of the village, but no one has seen him. Then they boldly go to the house where they know Jesus was a guest, and they ask for him. The host replies that he knows nothing of where his guest has gone. All he knows is that some time in the darkness of the night he heard a quiet foot-fall, and heard the door open and close softly; but in the morning the guest chamber was empty.

The inquirers find a shepherd who has been out all night on the hills with his flock, and they ask him if he has seen the Master. He replies that all he knows is that he saw a tall, strong, stalwart figure against the light of the stars, taking the upward path to the heights.

The gospel gives us the simple statement that "he rose a great while be-

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fore day, and departed into the mountain to pray." Brief and simple as are these records, we learn that Jesus Christ lived in communion with the eternal power of God. At the glowing heart of his living was this habit of going into solitude for prayer, and for the renewal of power. When he returned from those times of solitude, his utterance was like pure flame, because of the warmth and the light of his faith in the sustaining power of God. His hands communicated peace and life and power to those who were distressed.

The all-important thing in the gospel was a new discovery of divine power, available for the lives of men. That power redeemed from sin, healed disease, and brought light, courage, hope and joy to human lives.

In the course of events it brought the

conviction of immortality. It sent men out with the faith that they were in contact with the everlasting, and that nothing which the material world could do could separate them from the divine comradeship. Nations might fall, but that faith would outlive all other things. "The things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

## CHAPTER III

### IMMORTALITY AS A DUTY

THE habit of Jesus of going into solitude was central in his whole plan of life, his faith, his hope for the world. To pray in the wilderness was not a new thing; but the use that Jesus made of this did make a new revelation of divine power. The world was already familiar with the "holy men" who made the wilderness their habitation, emerging into human society only when driven by their physical necessities. These men solved the problems of human society by renouncing that society. Their answer to the needs of the world was to run away from the

world. They sought the salvation of their own souls by detaching themselves from humanity. And the inevitable result was that, for them, the meaning of life and religion faded out.

The use which Jesus made of solitude is expressed with the utmost clarity in his phrase, "*For their sakes I sanctify myself.*" His hours in the wilderness were for the renewal of power which could be used for the help of humanity. On the Mountain of Transfiguration the common thought of the time was expressed in the words of the disciple who proposed building habitations there, since the experience was so delightful, the privilege so great. The chosen few might revel in their ecstasy. But Jesus already saw the little lad down on the plain, distressed beyond endurance, and needing the re-

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lief which spiritual power could bring. His impulse was not to linger in the delights of the exalted experience but to hasten to the help of human life. To him the transfiguration was the coming of a new access of power to be used in service.

It is a profound truth of personality that we do not get power which we do not use. This is true physically, mentally and spiritually. Life will not use us as stagnant reservoirs of power, but as flowing streams. Whoever follows the method of Jesus in going into the wilderness will learn nothing from it unless he follow also the way of Jesus in self-forgetting service.

Jesus sometimes opened to his disciples the door into this inmost secret of his life. Again, little of this is recorded in the gospels. But he said,

“Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place and rest a while.” And at another time the disciples said to him, “Master, teach us to pray.” He taught them the uses of solitude, of what may be learned and may be gained, beside the sea, and in the mountains, and along the paths of the desert. It was not as an invitation to idleness, but for the discovery of more than human power, that he said, “Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

But there were people who replied that they were so tied by daily and hourly duty, so entangled with the cares of house and shop, that they could not go into the wilderness. And Jesus showed them how to find in their own homes the same solitude: for he said, “Thou, when thou prayest, enter



into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret." Not the place, and not the method, but the inmost secret of the soul was most significant. That direct relationship of the inner spirit to the Eternal Spirit meant the coming of sustaining strength to the faithful disciple.

This leads us to the confidence that the immortal spirit of man establishes a conscious relationship with the Everlasting, and derives joy and peace and sustaining strength from that relationship.

From that relationship with the Everlasting, Jesus derived his interpretation of the world and of life. To him light was not an envelope put around a dark world; but a radiance from the very heart of reality. He

was not speaking of exotic blooms but of the common flowers of the field when he said, "Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." Not of the children of the privileged few, but of the little urchins playing in the street, he spoke when he said, "Of such is the Kingdom of God."

The kind of world he lived in is revealed in these expressions of the discovery of divine glory. He had "eyes to see" and his land has become the "holy land" for the generations since his time. The vision of childhood and the heart of youth are necessary in those who would interpret fully the kind of world in which Jesus lived and which he revealed to those about him.

Older forms of faith, held by older men, enforced the restrictions of the moral law; while Jesus showed a spirit-

ual power which brought a great emancipation in a life of loyalty instead of a life of rules. Some interpretations of Christianity dwell upon the physical meagerness of the life of its founder, upon the simplicity of his birthplace, a stable, upon the narrowness of the horizons of the little country where he lived, and upon the scanty space of the borrowed tomb in which his body was laid. But he contrasts himself even with John the Baptist, the ascetic, and emphasizes his own joy in living. When asked why the young men who were his comrades in his travels did not keep the customary fasts, he replied that their comradeship with him was like that of the young men at a wedding, with the bridegroom. His reply means this, "Would you fast at a wedding feast?"

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No wonder the stories of his birth put more emphasis upon the song from the heavens than upon the narrowness of the manger; that the wondering shepherds are pictured, while there is no mention of the dull people of the town, who neither saw nor heard anything out of the common. And the story of the life of Jesus does not lead merely to a narrow niche in a rock, with a great stone to shut out the light. It leads to a garden in the full glory of the spring-time, and to human hearts which have discovered the immortality of the spirit.

The joyousness of the comradeship of the disciples with Jesus led them to believe that their earthly life together would be continued, that Jesus would not be crucified. And when that trag-

edy had come, they were in utter bewilderment.

When the disciples received the first intimation that the immortal spirit of Jesus had made itself known, they were not credulous. His crucifixion had brought despair, the feeling that their adventure with him was done. When Peter, in a brief phrase, declared his determination to go back to his former occupation of fisherman, he received an immediate response from others, who said, "We also go with thee." They thought they could take up life again where they had left it off, when Jesus had called them.

It is easy to imagine these fishermen making the needed repairs to their old boat, and shaking the dust from the nets which had been hanging idle.

Not so easy is it to imagine their gradual discovery of how completely their world had changed since last they cast their nets into the sea.

It was spring-time, and, as they looked up to the hillsides, that neighbor scattering seed was not just an ordinary man: he had become "the sower" who "went forth to sow" and whose living seed was like the truth of the Kingdom of God. The birds flying over the lakes were not common, almost worthless, little creatures which were sold two-for-a-farthing in the village market: they were care-free recipients of the unfailing care of God. The flowers on the shore, and the children playing in the sand, were not the unimportant things they had once been: for through them the divine glory was shining. Even the solitude of the

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highest hills upon the horizon held memories of sacred hours of prayer with the Master. The boat itself reminded them of the time they were crossing the lake, and they had been in panic because of the storm, and he had spoken the words, "Peace, be still."

Even the waters seemed to speak his memories, and the winds to repeat his words. The grass of the field, the sands upon the shore, every least thing had been changed by his interpretation of life and of the world, by the faith, learned of him, in the divine glory that shines through all that is most common. To break bread together and to share their cup brought back glowing memories of the infinitely precious hours in the upper room.

No, these men could not take up life again just where they had left it when

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they were called to become fishers of men. These discoveries prepared their minds for the new call to take up that work. They were making the discovery of a new comradeship with their Master, transcending his physical presence. They were turning their hearts to a new loyalty to the unseen Comrade.

Then came that wondrous hour of revelation. All night long upon the restless waters these men had toiled. The oars grew heavier, the nets more cumbersome, as the hours dragged their weary length. The morning stars appeared, and rose higher; while the constellations, which they had watched, sank toward the west, and began to pale as the east grew gray, then luminous. Deep shadows filled the valleys among the hills, and filmy



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mists floated over the face of the sea. The morning twilight advanced, and the east began to show color, and the stars were gone. The shadows among the hills became purple, and the waters, to the eastward, reflected the crimson of the sky, while the mists became opalescent. They had learned to see beauty and to love it in the wondrous comradeship of him who had "eyes to see." They, too, had learned to see.

Then suddenly they forgot their weariness, and the weight of the oars, and the long hours of toil through the night. On the shore stood a figure, and across the water came a voice, and they knew the immortal spirit of their Master. Again came the call to duty, again the demand for service in the face of hardship. Of that demand we

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read, "Now this he spake, signifying by what manner of death he should glorify God."

This faith in the immortality of the spirit of their Master did not come easily. The disciples were not overcredulous. And that faith came to them with the demand for martyrdom. It was no easy faith. It did not offer a way of escape from the monotony of the material world; it called them to face the worst that the world could inflict. It came with a demand for endurance, for chivalry, for loyalty, for courage.

It was no easy journey for these Galilean fishermen to retrace their steps to Jerusalem. The men who had recently put their Master to death were in authority there, and were determined to rid the world of this new

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faith. In Jerusalem was the temple, the home of the formalism against which their Master had protested, but a formalism so strongly intrenched that Jesus had exclaimed, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee." But into that temple went these fishermen to preach, even as he had preached in the last days he was permitted to live.

It would be unfair to the truth to minimize the moral courage which had come to these disciples, not merely the kind of courage that can do one heroic act, or that enables a man to fling his life away in one glorious moment of self-forgetfulness; but the courage that could undertake years of toil and hardship, could face persecution, and could unite *joy* with the anticipation

of *martyrdom*. It could be no slight thing which gave them that matchless heroism. It was nothing less than an experience, convincing them against all their doubts and despondency, that their Master lived, had revealed himself to them, and had commanded them to go out and preach his gospel.

There is a kind of rationalism which reads the gospels cautiously, accepts their ethical teaching with mild enthusiasm, passes over the record of anything above the drab and the dust of the surface of the material world, and puzzles over the motives which are derived from the Unseen. It reads the story of the last days of Jesus, until the twilight of the day of crucifixion. Then it closes the book. It does not read, nor does it attempt to interpret, the stories of a new life which conquers

death. It does not explain how the cross of shame became the symbol of glorious victory. It does not understand the message which the apostles carried to the world. After the twilight following the crucifixion it leaves the book closed. But also it cannot account for what happened in the Greek and Roman world in the years immediately following. It cannot explain the changes in the map of the ancient world. It closes its eyes to a radiance which shone upon those years. It leaves closed a great literature which was created at that time.

But the simple truth is that those years, out of which were born the books of our New Testament, were glorified by a spiritual power which rationalism cannot explain. Whoever seeks to explain the world by drawing geometric

figures in the dust, or by putting truth merely into the lines of logic, or by measuring the motives of men by what is commercially profitable, misses the real meaning of the world and the glory of life.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE SPIRIT AND ITS IMPLEMENT

THE most important message of the early apostles of the Christian faith, the truth upon which they laid the greatest emphasis, was the immortality of the spirit of Jesus Christ. This they presented principally in the form of narrative. The reappearance of that spirit to their vision gave them a great conviction. The story of that reappearance went out as a piece of news. Men did not *explain* the news: they *related* it, and drew their moral and spiritual conclusions from it. Instead of rationalizing that piece of news, Paul frankly says, "Behold I

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show you a mystery.” Not a philosophy of immortal life, but a narrative, was the glowing heart of the message of the apostles.

The narrative carried conviction not because of a logical argument but because of its moral incentive and its spiritual power. If the story had gone out that Judas, after hanging himself, had reappeared among his fellows, the moral sensibilities of people would have stood in the way of belief. But when the disciples became convinced of the reality of their experiences of seeing the spirit of Christ, and related those experiences to people who had known the life of the Master, there was a moral presumption in favor of belief. People knew by the deepest instincts of their hearts that the qualities they had seen in him ought to be immortal.



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Whether put into definite phrase, or cherished as a glowing hope, men felt that what *deserves* to live is indeed *deathless*. The human heart has an instinctive faith that integrity is immortal, that love is eternal, that truth is imperishable.

The gospel came to men not primarily as a new logic but as a new discovery of power. If one reads the gospel narratives, watching for the word "power," or its equivalents, he will be impressed by the truth that the teaching of Jesus Christ was dynamic rather than argumentative. A typical phrase is, "His word was with power." Carrying the same inquiry into reading the other books of the New Testament will strongly confirm the conviction that the new discovery of power was central in the gospel message.

It brought a new sense of the value of personality, a conviction of its deathless quality. The greatest moral incentive that ever came into the world came with the presence of the spirit of Christ as he joined the company of his disciples, and brought to them the conviction that he was immortal.

Two things these men came to believe ardently. One was that even when no longer visible, the spirit of Jesus Christ maintained a comradeship with them. The other was that he bestowed upon them immortality even as he himself possessed it. And in their minds these two things were indissolubly linked. Conceivably they might have separated the two: they might have believed in the living spirit of Christ walking with them without having a confidence in their own immortal-

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ity; or they might have believed that the spirit of Christ lived in a detached world, and that they themselves would live eternally. But they did, in reality, believe that Christ lived in constant companionship with them, a source of power for every need, and the giver of immortal life to them.

Thus the eternal life was to them a present reality. It was not something merely to be added at the far end of this life; not an appendix to the volume that tells the tale of this world. Instead of looking afar for the immortal life, and seeing it across the chasm of death, they found it as a quality in their present life. They discovered that there was a power working in and through them which gave the promise of imperishable life. It is in the present tense that the admonition

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was written, "If ye then *be risen* with Christ, seek those things that are above." This immortal life, a present reality, had a right to demand all their loyalty and their entire life.

After the opportunity for wide observation and long experience, the apostle John gave the results which were evident in clean living which justified the faith in immortality. He wrote, "Every one that hath this hope in him purifieth himself."

The moral consequences of the immortal hope were evident not only in the lives of individuals, but in the fellowship of a new social order. The consciousness of having an unseen Comrade did not alienate the hearts of men from their fellows. Nor did their intense conviction of a life to come lessen their sense of duty in their pres-

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ent life. Nor did the anticipation of a future world make them indifferent to the world in which they lived. Indeed this faith gave them the courage for the colossal task of changing the existing social order and its political organizations, and bringing men into the new Kingdom of God, which was to be fulfilled on the earth. This faith generated a great power, and a burning zeal, which did not hesitate in the presence of any task which was conceived as duty.

Three significant phrases are used by Paul: "The kingdom of God is not in word but in power"; "The fashion of this world passeth away"; and "Our citizenship is in heaven, whence also we look for a Saviour." The world was to be transformed, and the bearers of the message of the gospel of Christ

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had the moral responsibility of giving themselves as the implements for this work. How far this is from a sense of dissociation from life, and detachment from duty!

The conviction of immortality lifted life by the power of new moral incentives. Conversely these moral incentives intensified the conviction of immortality. The eternal world made its demands upon these men, by the very stern voice of duty. But the fulfilment of duty gave a moral worth to life which carried the conviction that their life should be, and therefore was, imperishable.

Wherever men endured hardship with high courage and a great cheer, for their loyalty to the living Christ, other men became convinced of the reality of immortal life. Their con-

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duct became an argument for their faith. Men saw the power of their moral incentives and said, "This kind of life cannot perish." When a martyr was chained to the stake and endured the flames, for his Master's sake, there were those who saw and were not terrified. Rather were they impelled to accept the same discipleship and endure, if need be, the same tortures.

This kind of conviction has, indeed, done its work down through the Christian centuries. Men have heeded the command of the living Christ, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel." In their obedience they have endured measureless hardship and untold suffering. Going to men of many races, there have been those who have believed the gospel because of the message; but there have been those also

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who have been convinced of the truth of the message by the fortitude of its bearers. Not so much by their words as by the evidence of power in their lives have these new converts been won. Such heroism is, itself, immortal.

The courage, the fortitude, the faith that men have shown in their service to humanity have been a powerful incentive to confidence in life everlasting. Such qualities are, themselves, deathless, and men turn with confidence to the future believing that what deserves to live shall live eternally. Every noble life leaves the fiber of itself woven into the fabric of the world. The kind of world we live in will not let integrity perish. The man who throws himself into the doing of his whole duty, letting himself be carried by the full force of moral and spiritual convic-



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tions, is likely to be carried far by the very momentum of that movement,—to be carried, indeed, past all fear of death. Such is the evidence from the early years of Christianity; and this is confirmed in our own experience.

This faith of the apostles had, of course, its difficulties to be overcome; arising principally from the materialism and cynicism of the age. The testimony of the senses to the presence of the material world always spreads a veil of obscurity over the reality of the spiritual world. Yet Jesus showed men the way into a direct relationship with that spiritual and eternal world. “God is spirit” was one of his brief intense statements. And again he said, “The words that I have spoken unto you are *spirit* and are *life*.” This direct relationship to God, the secret of

which he revealed to men, was the glowing center of the immortal life. "This is life eternal that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent" was one of his last utterances.

A reading of the gospels and the epistles, with this thought in mind, will convey the impression of the essential similarity of the spiritual experiences of Jesus and Paul. Jesus finds a sustaining strength which comes from his times of solitude when he enters into mystical communion with the unseen Being, whom he calls Father. Paul explains the power of his own life by relating it to an unseen Being, for whom he uses the name Christ. One of his most significant statements is this, "It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which

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I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me." That mystical life possessed his whole being. Again he says, "To me, to live is Christ."

To Paul there was no contradiction in the experience of his Master and of himself regarding the object of their devotion, the unseen Being with which they were in mystical relationship. To the disciples in Colossae he wrote, "Your life is hid with Christ in God." He bids them pray, "That God may open unto us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ." That there was a mystery about the immortal life, and about the relationship of living men with the source of spiritual power, was not, for him, a reason for skepticism.

Yet the minds of other men found a serious barrier to faith in the problem of the body as an implement of a living being, for they could conceive no real dynamic life apart from a physical body. When the apostles declared their faith in the immortality of human spirits, men asked (even as they do today), "With what body do they come?" And Paul meets this with his vivid figure of the wheat. His answer is essentially this: "Foolish one! Even in your wheat field, when the life of the wheat grows anew, it does not restore the body of the seed which you sowed. That life within the seed is a creative life. The seed you sowed perished. But that creative life builds for itself a new body, according to its need in the new life." This faith relates itself directly to the confidence, which the gos-

pel of Jesus Christ taught men to hold, that they had discovered an eternal world as a present reality, and had established a vital relationship with it, so that the present material and visible life became a thing of secondary significance, while the power of that immortal life became the primary thing in living.

This problem of the body as an effective implement for the spirit, if the spirit is to live a dynamic life, disturbed the minds of some of those who heard the stories of the reappearances of the immortal spirit of Jesus Christ. A disembodied spirit seemed to them a mere wraith, a mere shadow of personality. On the other hand, the resuscitation of a physical body, ponderable and earthly, seemed an imprisonment rather than an emancipation of the deathless soul. They had difficulty in grasping the

thought of a spiritual immortality; of a dynamic spirit perfectly self-reliant; of a spirit that could not die and that, in the eternal world, was emancipated from all that is "of the earth, earthy."

Very wistfully men asked the question, "If a man die shall he live again?" If death meant that the whole of human personality perished, even for the time, there would be difficulties well-nigh insurmountable in the way of faith in another life. But the faith of the gospel was that the spirit is itself immortal and "shall not see death." Spirit builds the body, not body the spirit. In the course of a normal human life, the spirit builds and rebuilds the body many times. The immortal faith says that it can be trusted to create for itself whatever implement it needs in the eternal world.

## CHAPTER V

### THE LIFT OF THE TIDE

**T**HE first Christian centuries were a time of radiant light, of buoyant faith, of vibrant life. Then this unearthly glory passed, like the color of a wondrous sunrise fading into the common light of day,—and a gray day with the threat of storm. Was it necessary for that light to fade and for the glory to depart? It was not because persecutions became unbearable, discouragements many, and numbers few. The church was not, indeed, exterminated, though its enemies had aimed at that.

On the contrary, the church had num-

bers, and influence and growing wealth. It had survived its persecutors. It had begun to build for itself a kingdom.

With the obstacles gone from its path, why did its progress halt? With its numbers not constantly decimated by martyrdom, but instead increasing easily, why did the light of its faith fade? With more of wealth with which to work, why did courage and consecration abate?

One reason is that men began to make the realities of the Christian life the material for logic, for argument, for debate and for strife. Christianity was, in its first years, called, "The Way." It was not proved argumentatively, nor defined with precision. It was lived, and the joy of living that life was contagious. It spread from heart to heart by the power of its own vital-



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ity. It was a mystic experience in men's souls, a power from unseen sources, a conviction for which men gladly gave even their physical life. When the endeavor was made to state it logically, it eluded statement; and when it became the subject of controversy the life itself was stifled.

At the first, the religion of Jesus was a religion of youth. Instead of the problem of taking the religion of the minds of the old and adapting it to the young, the religion of Jesus had the ardor, the joy, the spirit of adventure which won an increasing number of young men, ready for any service to which it might call.

But in its progress, Christianity encountered the Greek mind which delighted in making philosophies of all that came within its reach. The simple

question, "Are you of the Way?" had been the test of the new faith. This was changed, and men were asked to state, to define, to argue about and to defend their philosophy of religion. This is largely the interest of older minds. Sedate, logical, methodical old men gave this mystic life a series of definitions; and failed to see that the life itself was gone.

In its further progress, Christianity encountered the Roman mind with its genius for legalism and organization. The Roman was trained in the task of repressing subject people, and of collecting revenue from them. Christianity began to do the same things: to build a system of laws, to give authority to organizations, to become thirsty for revenue. Restriction took the place of inspiration, and a new legalism was

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built up that was as repressive as that against which Jesus himself had protested. Obedience to the authority of organization, and conformity to its regulations, took the place of the spontaneous life which Jesus lived and taught; and the light and joy and ardor faded. Again, this legalistic work was done by older minds; and the spirit of youth, with its idealism, disappeared.

This change from poetry to prose, from joyous life to formalism was so pronounced, that it is difficult even to picture the glowing light, the ardent fervor of the first years of the Christian faith. It has sometimes been described as a mere passing beauty, like the brief color in the east on the morning of a gray day. But in reality it is of the very genius of the religion of

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Jesus to have that joy, that light, that sense of sustaining power, that ardent faith in life immortal.

Men ask very wistfully whether it be possible to restore it; or if it faded in those early years, never to return. The answer is that it never wholly faded, and that it can be restored. The landscape of Christianity, with its rationalism, its legalism, its formalism and its restrictions, became harsh and gray; but in every generation, throughout the Christian centuries, there have been those who have kept the undying fire, whose hearts have been warmed by it, whose eyes have seen the heavenly radiance, and who have transmitted that mystical life to those who followed in their steps.

Down the highways of Christian history have come its theologians, its phil-

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osophers, its law-givers, its organizers, and its generals with their marching armies. To the eyes of the world, this is Christianity. But there are lines of travel, all through the centuries, that have not followed these highways with their pomp and their show of worldly power. There is a tradition of freedom, of originality, of spontaneous life, of direct personal experience, which has never been lost. The flame of mystical experience has never been allowed to die out. Its radiance, kept in secret places, has been an unfading reality. Christianity still has the hot blood of youth coursing within its veins. The inner life is immortal.

One of the serious checks upon the mystical life has been controversy over the object of man's devotion. Who is the unseen Comrade with which the

mystic walks the path of his life? The endeavor to answer this question, and the arguments concerning it, have often inhibited the vital experience of the Christian life. Men try to define the indefinable and may be unconscious that they have shut out the glowing reality of spiritual experience.

Jesus went into solitude for spiritual experience, and to renew his power for human service. He called the object of his devotion, and the source of this power by the name, Father. Paul had like experiences of communion and of sustaining strength. He said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Evidently the unseen Comrade is not exacting regarding the name by which he shall be called. Yet when controversy rages around the endeavor to give exact definitions to

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divine power, men close for themselves the channels through which that power comes. When argument waxes loud, the 'Still Small Voice' is silenced. The logical faculty closes the door which leads to the mystic Way.

No one can explain fully the power that lifts the tides of the sea. Yet men use that reinforcing power: they make an ally of the lift of the tide. There are three impulses in the tide; a lift and then a pause, another lift and a second pause, then a third lift. The momentum of the whirl of the earth, the gravitation of the sun and of the moon, are elements in this power which lifts the tides. We cannot separate these influences, nor give to each its definition. But meantime we can use this power in the great deep. To engage in controversy over the source of

this power and leave our boats upon the shore, would be folly indeed.

The unseen Presence is indefinable. But Christian experience through the ages has found its reality. Imagine that this earth had an unbroken envelope of cloud. We could not see the moon. Yet the tides would ebb and flow upon the shores of the sea. They would still be timed by the passing of that unseen heavenly body. Men would marvel that unseen hands beckoned to the waters and they rose and followed; that a voice unheard spoke to them and they obeyed with the utmost fidelity. Yet men would prepare their tide-tables, knowing that that lifting power, and the flow of the waters in response to it, were perfectly dependable. They would make an ally of the moon in its passing though they had no hint of its



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existence save only this mysterious flow of the sea.

The outermost planets of our solar system were discovered because visible planets responded to their influence when they passed. Men knew there must be a heavenly body, as yet unseen, which wielded this influence. Something more than empty space must be out there beyond their normal vision. In the same way men would infer the passing of a heavenly body, such as the moon, even if this earth moved ever enveloped in mist, and the moon were never seen. Men would not argue that as the moon was unseen, the tides were a delusion. They would not leave their boats upon the bank arguing that other men merely imagined the tides. That mysterious but perfectly dependable power would be used as an ally.

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There is an unbroken continuity to mystical experience throughout the Christian centuries. The object of the mystic's devotion is unseen, but the divine power is a great reality. The tides of the spiritual life have immeasurable lifting power. Without defining that power, without reducing its working to a rational statement, men can use and do use that sustaining strength.

Watch the course of this vital reality in the Christian faith, and phenomena are seen which cannot be accounted for except by a measureless Power which moves through the skies of our life. The tides of the Spirit are a reality. Something more than human power is in the tasks that are performed; something more than worldly wisdom is in its counsel; something more than human

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stoicism in its endurance of pain; something more than the happiness of the outer world in its radiant joy.

Sometimes this divine Power has manifested itself in great revivals of spiritual religion, in spite of the worldliness of the more formal elements of Christianity. Sometimes it uses implements which seem utterly inadequate or altogether hopeless. The material world and the animalism of man can account for Jerry McAuley in the gutter. But only superhuman Power can account for Jerry McAuley sobered, cleansed, spiritually renewed, and used as a mighty influence for the redemption of a multitude of other men from their sins.

He is not a solitary instance. The pathway of the mystical form of Christianity is marked by men whose lives

are monuments to this divine Power. Above the mists that limit our vision there is a Being who is eternally concerned for the welfare of men, and whose passing lifts human lives, even from depths of degradation, to higher levels. We may see the working of that lifting Power and may know thereby the nearness of the Source of it.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE UNFAILING COMRADE

**T**HE era in which we live is marked by great advances in material knowledge. Observation has been developed to the utmost capacity of human organs of sense. Reason has been trained to the highest degree of precision. Invention has attained results that surpass men's dreams and imagination.

The inevitable consequence is a great confidence in the things of the material world, and a great activity in acquiring them. To be guided by the senses, and satisfied with the results, is characteristic of the lives of thousands of people.

The spiritual life has new and novel obstacles. There is a materialism which may be defined as the confidence that the realities of this world are those perceived by the physical senses. There is a rationalism which may be defined as a complete trust in logic as the mental operation which will lead to truth. Materialism and rationalism shut out the world of spiritual experience and deny the validity of that experience.

But a great scientist of our own time has said that only a part of this world consents to record itself on our physical perceptions; that only a limited part of truth flows in the forms and patterns of reason; and that man's real life rests on unseen foundations. This is the confession that science is limited in its field and in its methods. He has de-

clared that faith leads men to the abiding realities by which they live the higher life.

The endeavor has been made in some quarters, indeed, is still made, to apply "scientific methods" to the spiritual world and to make an analysis of religious experience by rational processes. But the realities of the spiritual world transcend such research, and religious experience defies analysis. The botanist, excellent as is his work, leaves behind him a trail of dead flowers which he has picked to pieces in his analytical work. The gardener, with his watering pot and his hoe, leaves more flowers beside his path. The mystic is not analytical. But his experience and his faith are vital. The religious needs of the world today are better served by those who cultivate the flowers of the

spiritual life than by those who make an analysis of those blossoms, and who fail to record their aroma and their beauty.

An immigrant, coming to America, wandered over this new land for a long time before gaining a foothold. Finally he bought, for very little, a tract of dry unproductive land. It lay between the mountains and the sea, and this man had made a discovery. The streams which came down the sunlit sides of the mountains lost themselves in the loose soil of this gently sloping tract, and the waters percolated slowly through it, on their way toward the sea. The surface of the tract was dry, but there was an abundance of warmth and moisture beneath the surface. He planted vines deeply, and soon he had completely transformed that tract of land.



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Searching far and wide over the surface of that land would not have made the great discovery. Drawing the geometric figures of a surveyor would not have changed it. What was needed was a digger; and when he came he had not far to go to make the vital discovery.

Our modern life stands in direct relationships with the majestic spiritual realities; but its surface is dry and unproductive of joy and peace and faith. The materialism which stirs the surface dust, and the rationalism which draws geometric figures on its surface, declare that they are gaining an understanding of the whole area. But they leave us in the dust.

Spiritual experience goes beneath the surface, and has not far to go to make the infinitely precious discovery of life-sustaining powers. If we send

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the roots of our being into the deep soil they shall be nourished from secret streams of life.

Men are still arguing about the nature of the Being who responds to man's spiritual aspirations. And the argument inhibits spiritual experience. There is need of the adventure of faith which is willing to test the reality of this experience, and to receive the sustaining Power which waits for the opportunity to work man's redemption.

Men argue about, and seek to make distinctions among, the divine Father, the Christ of the mystic, and the Jesus who lived in Palestine. If the mystic declares that his Christ is identical with the immortal Spirit which the disciples recognized as their Master, someone asks to be shown the marks of identifi-

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cation. And when someone else seeks to draw a line between what is done for man by the love of the Father and what is done by the influence of Jesus Christ, someone else declares them to be indistinguishable.

Meantime the poets seem to approach the heart of the reality of spiritual experience with surer tread than do the theologians. Affirmation reaches some goals which are missed by logic. In some journeys we have to let experience take the lamp and be the guide. Whittier says:

The healing of his seamless dress  
Is by our beds of pain:  
We touch him in life's throng and press,  
And we are whole again.

This is the expression of mystical experience, the reality of knowing that we

are in relationship with an unseen Comrade.

The further we go, in our modern progress, in a knowledge of the universe, the more majestic is our thought of the Creator. And as that thought grows in majesty, there is a deeper sense of contrast between it and the sense of nearness, of intimacy, of tenderness of the Christ of the mystic.

We apply majestic terms to God the Father, who is the Creator of the worlds. He is eternal, almighty, infinite. But how are these universal qualities to be blended with the sense of a comradeship with One who shares our experiences and understands our simplest needs?

We derive the thought of eternity and of infinity from *meditation*. We gain the feeling of intimacy and sym-

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pathy from mystical *experience*. We experience God only in the nearer phases of his Being. We do not experience infinity. We will not know, by experience, eternity except by the continuity of our own immortal life. But spiritual experience does lead to adoration, to worship, to a sense of establishing a relationship with a Power which has measureless resources.

Spiritual experience gives a great chorus of testimony to the reality of a Being who is near, sympathetic, powerful, and wise; a Being who responds to our call, who helps in our weakness, and who guides in time of need. And whoever, with open mind, and with understanding heart, has seen a human life visibly sustained by a Power more than human, a Power unseen but ever real, knows that our life is more than what

the eyes see, and the world is more than what the hands handle.

We do deal with mystery; and reason cannot give exact definitions to experiences and to the Source of them. But the mystery invites us to a great spiritual adventure. Reason has no right to make us halt in that adventure. The greatest need of the world today, of our modern life, is the sense of a vital relationship with the things that are eternal, the consciousness of living the life which is immortal.

Can the radiance of the first Christian years be restored? Yes, for the light which has sometimes burned low has never been quenched. We still live in the kind of world which Jesus interpreted to men. The physical world but thinly veils the glory of God; and that glory sometimes breaks

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through. In the flowers of the field, in the faces of children, in the order and beauty of the world, he is visible for those who have "eyes to see."

Still do prayer and meditation yield the results which Jesus found when he "rose a great while before day, and departed into the mountain to pray." The shepherds of Israel, in far-off times, watching by night the stars and guarding their flocks, learned the way into the mystical experience of the Eternal. They learned that there is a Voice which speaks in silence, a Presence that makes itself known in the quiet of the heart. They did not make a theology of it, but they did set it to music. And the joyousness which flows in music, and in poetry, is a better expression of the inner spirit of the religion of Jesus than are the logi-

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cal explanations which do not explain, and the philosophical forms in which the spiritual life refuses to flow.

Human life has still the promise and the possibilities which Jesus found in it. Into man's personality the power of the Infinite is waiting to flow, if he will make himself a channel for service to humanity. Still do we need inspiration rather than repression; still does humanity possess a capacity for originality, for spiritual initiative, for resourcefulness and for unmeasured growth. It was the spiritual experience of a man of our own times that led to the writing of these lines:

O Master, let me walk with thee  
In lowly paths of service free;  
Tell me thy secret; help me bear  
The strain of toil, the fret of care. . . ,



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Teach me thy patience. Still with thee,  
In closer, dearer company,  
In work that keeps faith sweet and strong,  
In trust that triumphs over wrong;  
  
In hope that sends a shining ray  
Far down the future's broadening way;  
In peace that only thou canst give,  
With thee, O Master, let me live!

In such experience, Christ does not become a fading memory from the ancient world, nor a mere tradition from an ever-receding past. The gap between his life and ours does not widen with the years. His story is not simply an oft-told tale from a far-off land. Spiritual experience bridges the gap of time and space; for that experience is timeless. There is an impressive continuity about it, through the ages. Life is lifted out of its narrow-

ing horizons and gains eternal meaning.

There are men today who are willing to acknowledge that there is a *wisdom* in Christ's teaching, a *shrewdness* in his answers to his critics, a *value* in his principles of conduct, but who have never flung themselves into a loyalty to the unseen Leader, and do not know the secret joys of an undivided heart. Indeed the rationalism of today dissects the motives of idealism, and thus destroys them.

There are lines along which knowledge is advancing very slowly from generation to generation and from age to age; and concerning which we need feel no deep concern, no consuming ardor. For example, the unsolved problems of mathematics and the meaning of the spiral nebulae are not of the most vital importance for us. But, on

the other hand, the results of spiritual experience are of prime importance. While we are living we either get or fail to get the essential meaning of our life.

The realities of the spiritual world are outside of our sense perceptions. They escape the crucible and the test tube; they transcend the measuring rod and the scales. But they respond with light and with power to the test of spiritual experience. The way for a man to make the test is to fling himself whole into the life which religion implies. This is done not by rationalistic processes but by the will; by a whole-hearted loyalty to duty, and a complete consecration to the Eternal.

Any theory of the world, any interpretation of life, may be tested by asking what incentives it gives for living, by inquiring what kind of motives

would really express it. The Christian faith tells us that the real world is eternal, and offers immortality unto men. Men take, toward this declaration, the attitude of agnosticism or of faith. But what is the effect of this choice upon men's vital motives?

The position of agnosticism may be rationally defended: point by point it may make its argument with no break in the logical chain. But what incentives to conduct, what motives for life, does it offer? It advises caution; justifies timidity; bids one hesitate. It inspires no master-motives, no courageous adventures, no magnificent daring. It says there is nothing worth dying for; and it doubts if there be anything worth living for. It produces no great leaders, and bestows no inspiring visions. It is neutral in its colors and

lukewarm in its affections. It asks, "Will it pay?" And when the ardent heart of youth is ready for a great consecration, agnosticism chills his heart by asking, "What's the use?"

May faith be rationally defended? That is not the highest test. Rather ask, "What motives does it supply? What impulses does it inspire?" Faith in immortality is its own highest justification. Tested by the incentives it furnishes toward clean living, that faith stands secure. Ask, "What conduct is in keeping with it?" The answer is that it justifies integrity and truth and honor. Faith is the mother of chivalry, of splendid daring, of complete loyalty to a cause. It is far-sighted, and is willing to devote itself to ends that lie far beyond the span of a single lifetime. It puts a high value on the

powers of human personality. It dares to trust the sustaining power of God. It does not ask, in advance of service rendered, that there be guarantees of economic profit. It justifies ideals and aspirations and hopes and prayers.

Jesus set before the eyes of men a picture of a better world, which would come by transforming the existing world. To this picture, this vision, this dream, he gave the name, the Kingdom of God. When men asked him for a prayer, he gave them a very brief one: but among its few petitions was one for the coming of this Kingdom. Why should men believe that it will come? Why pray for it? Why labor and, if need be, die for it? How can any one prove to men that they ought to cherish this age-long hope for the new Kingdom?

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If for no other reason we should cherish that hope because it is associated with all the greatest incentives in life; with all the most buoyant hopes of the human heart; with all the noblest motives of the human will; with all of our most ardent ideals. The doubt of it is linked with our times of depression. Selfishness bids us withhold our service from it. Cynicism questions the worth of it. Strife and jealousy are out of harmony with it. Agnosticism says it is not worth while. Thus the doubt of it is discredited because of the kind of motives to which it prompts; and faith in it is justified by the inspiration which it brings.

Even so with faith in immortality: depression and doubt and cynicism bid us hesitate to trust its promptings; but all things that make joy and affirma-

tion and chivalry link themselves with it. *Doubt stands in weakness*, not daring to trust the resources of the unseen. *Faith walks in power*, confident that its path is imperishable and that the sustaining strength of the Eternal cannot fail. Immortality begins as a quality of the life that now is, giving it moral worth and spiritual meaning. It gains assurance from the power which comes into human life from invisible sources. It illuminates the landscape of life with an unfading radiance. The hills shall dissolve, but the eternal light shall continue.











































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